

**Community Reconciliation, Inc.**  
**VORP (Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program) of Chattanooga**  
**Funding Category: Crime and Delinquency Prevention**

**Project Description 7.5.7**

**Need:** In 2001 in Tennessee 83,412 juveniles were referred to courts, 3,478 in Hamilton County. In Hamilton County the trend from 1996 is an increase of 21.1% from 87.5 referrals per 1000 in 1996 to 106/1000 in 2002. Usually the first appearance in court leads to a light sentence emboldening many to repeat their offenses, since the court experience has taught them little more than to avoid detection better next time. Recidivism nationally is from 50 to 80%. At some point, repeat juvenile offenders are incarcerated in already overcrowded facilities at the cost of more than \$100/day.

Judge Suzanne Bailey noting the success of other VORP programs and the failure of traditional methods invited Reconciliation, Inc. (VORP) to establish a program to handle all appropriate non-violent offender cases. Judge Bailey provides an office for VORP at the Hamilton County Juvenile Court Building where we operate as an independent supporting agency. VORP provides a service not offered elsewhere in Chattanooga.

**Goals:** Goal 1. To reduce the recidivism of juvenile offenders by successfully handling cases outside of the court system. If recidivism is reduced, the court saves time and the community saves money.

The cost of incarcerating a juvenile is currently more than \$100 dollars a day, and juvenile detention space is already overcrowded. Less recidivism reduces the need to build and maintain detention centers providing a substantial savings to the State. Most of our cases are shoplifting which is the entry crime for most hardened offenders. An outcome of reducing recidivism is that juveniles are re-directed to productive lives which support the community rather than becoming a tax burden. Goal 2. To teach conflict resolution skills to the community; this will result in a safer and more peaceful community.

**Target clients:** Our target clients are juvenile offenders of nonviolent crimes (i.e. shoplifting, vandalism, burglary) and the victims of those crimes. We anticipate that we will serve at least two hundred clients in the next year. The offenders are ages 10-18. Victims represent all ages only limited by their cognitive ability to understand the purpose of the program. For example, minor children can be participating victims if the parent(s) are willing to be present during the process. Offenders and victims represent all income levels. Gender and race/ethnicity of our clients are consistent with the population with the population of the community served. The offenders may be elementary, middle school, high school, home schooled or GED students. A large percentage of the juvenile offenders who have participated in VORP have school issues. All meeting sites are handicap accessible. We have Spanish translators available and we would access services for the deaf if needed.

Data reflects cases 10/28/02—7/31/03

8/1/03----8/31/04

Offenders			Offenders		
Male 50%	Females 50%		Males 42%	Females 58%	
White 70%	Black 30%	Other 0%	White 60%	Black 38%	Other 2%
11 years of age	3%		11 years of age	0%	
12 years of age	1.5%		12 years of age	6%	
13 years of age	13.6%		13 years of age	8%	
14 years of age	27.3%		14 years of age	9%	
15 years of age	10.6 %		15 years of age	22%	
16 years of age	21.2 %		16 years of age	26%	
17 years of age	22.7 %		17 years of age	29%	

**Approach:** We have established a process in the juvenile court for receiving referrals. Cases are given to VORP through the informal adjustment department and also from the bench. These offenders and their victims are contacted by the VORP staff who explains the program and asks for their participation. If both parties agree to participate, then the case is assigned to a facilitator and the paperwork to follow the case is created. The VORP meetings are held. Once a formal contract for restitution is established, the case is monitored until completed.

Restorative Justice is a concept developed in Elkhart, Indiana, in the decade of the 1970's. It is centered on a transformative encounter mediated between an offender and his or her victim. The encounter requires the willingness of both parties to meet and work to create a means of healing. For the offender this means a willingness to acknowledge fault and a desire to restore the situation. For the victim this means a willingness to meet with the offender and share the impact of the crime.

What has been learned over the decades where this form of justice has been practiced is that offenders begin to understand the personal impact of their crimes and are far less likely to repeat them. (Nugent, W. and Paddock, J.B. (1996) *Evaluation of the effects of a victim-offender reconciliation program on reoffense*. Research on Social Work Practice. 2, 155-178.) Since the meetings are handled outside the court, offenders come away without the typical expense of a court appearance and without a criminal record. Since they remain in community and pay a mutually agreed upon restitution, the offender experiences an increase in self esteem and responsibility. Victims also benefit by being able

to ask questions about the crime, by gaining “closure” on the event, and by participating in setting the restitution they receive. Our program is modeled after the first Tennessee VORP program in Anderson County, Tennessee. A study undertaken by the University of Tennessee at Knoxville which examined this first VORP program concluded that VORP participants were (50%) half as likely to re-offend as those who followed the standard court procedures. See also : Umbreit, Mark S. 1998. “Restorative Justice Through Victim-Offender Mediation: A Multi-Site Assessment.” *Western Criminology Review* 1 (1).

**Staffing:** Berti LeWinter, executive director, full-time, received training through the National Association for Community Mediation Regional Institute Training. She participated in 20 hours of facilitator training that was provided by the executive director of Community Mediation of Anderson County to our first group of volunteer facilitators. Ms LeWinter “shadowed” the executive director and program coordinator on-site at their program in Clinton, Tennessee. She completed a B.S. Degree in Social Welfare with an undergraduate field placement experience at the Virginia Department of Children’s Protective Services. She has worked with the juvenile justice system and with teens. The positions she has held have required leadership abilities and an aptitude for detail. She operates with one part-time program coordinator from our offices located at the Juvenile Court. The executive director oversees all aspects of our program and speaks at community forums. She recruits and conducts the trainings for our volunteer facilitators. Ed Waterhouse, program coordinator, part-time, has a B.A. degree and a M.Ed. in Human Resources Development. He completed 30 day training under the executive director and has observed several cases. He has experience working with teens and volunteers. Mr. Waterhouse has demonstrated his ability to be caring and non-judgmental and to be a valuable resource to the volunteer facilitators. His responsibilities are: a) Intake referrals—involving evaluation, explaining the process to potential clients, clarifying information with the court and completing necessary paperwork b) volunteer facilitator assignment—taking into consideration the age, race and gender of the offender as well as any special qualities of the volunteer or needs of the victim c) closing cases—ensuring that all cases are handled expeditiously, that all restitution is recovered and that all paperwork assigned by the court is completed.

**Program Partners:** Our essential partner is the Juvenile Court and Judge Suzanne Bailey who asked for our program to be established. Working with the court, we have created the model and the forms to receive case referrals. The Administrative Office of the Supreme Court of the State of Tennessee, and the federation of VORP programs in Tennessee help us to maintain professional standards and offer guidance. Kiwanis and other foundations, local individuals and churches, merchants and companies have partnered with VORP to provide support for our agency.

### **Projected Outcomes:**

1. Number of cases referred to the number of cases accepted
2. Percentage of accepted cases in which an agreement is reached
3. Percentage of agreements that are fulfilled (i.e. cases closed successfully).

4. Percentage of recidivism of those using the VORP program provided by the Court.
5. Data will be stored in a secure file in the VORP office at the Court Building.
6. Data will be maintained on age, gender, race/ethnicity, zip code
7. Information will be made available through outreach efforts including Newsletters, brochures, presentations to civic groups and schools
8. Offer conflict resolution skills to 4 organizations/schools per year
9. Survey of victims and offenders to measure the degree of satisfaction achieved by those using the program.

**Sustainability:** The Long Range Planning Committee of VORP works in conjunction with its Development Committee to establish budgets and to provide long term stable funding from: Individuals, Corporations, Faith Community, Foundation Grants, Merchant's support, Fundraisers, Court and State support.

Individual supporters are recruited by the Executive Director as she speaks in many civic forums in the community. Our facilitators themselves provide a stable source of support. Although limited, the Juvenile Court provides space and phone, and the State of Tennessee has limited funding as well.

The Kiwanis Club of Chattanooga is committed to a long-term sponsorship of VORP and the proceeds of the annual Chattanooga Chase run are all to be given to VORP. This fundraising event will supply advertisement and publicity as well as funding. The professional network of Kiwanis will provide a network and a base of solicitation to local foundations, businesses and merchants.

The Faith community will be approached by Board members as a source of volunteers, neutral meeting sites, and financial support, along with the retired community. Faith community funding will be available in early 2005. A newsletter is being mailed quarterly to all our constituents with a return mailer provided.

*1. Describe how the project will address the problem in #1 above.*

The Hamilton County Juvenile Court asked for VORP to be established here because of the current trend and the failure of traditional methods to address the problem. Through facilitated meetings, offenders have the opportunity to take responsibility for their offenses, victims have a chance to talk about their feelings and receive restitution, and there is a strong likelihood that less than half of the offenders will re-offend. Founded at the request of Juvenile Court Judge Suzanne Bailey and Mayor Gene Roberts, we have been given space at Juvenile Court where we operate as an independent supporting agency. Cases that fail to meet all guidelines are remanded back to court.

Victim- Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORP) are effective and documented methods to handle crimes, reduce recidivism, and promote healthy communities. A University of Tennessee study of the first VORP program in Tennessee (Anderson Co.) revealed that 97% of cases were successfully

completed and that the offenders were 50% less likely to re-offend in the future. Chattanooga is the last major metropolitan area of Tennessee to begin a program.

**2. *List the Standard Program Category which best describes the project you propose.***

DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

**4. *Describe how the project will assist TCCY in maintaining compliance with the JJDP Act***

The project fits with the JJDP Act objectives by collaborating with court personnel to develop a comprehensive and coordinated system of services that will help preserve families and provide services in the least restrictive environment, provide early intervention, interagency collaboration, family involvement, and partnerships in the service provision/referral when possible. Early identification and service provision will reduce the number of juveniles in the court system and future delinquent offenses, helping TCCY in its efforts to maintain compliance with the JJDP Act.

**5. *Describe the replication possibilities of this project***

Victim offender mediation for juveniles is already being duplicated by agencies throughout the state. Services are versatile enough to adjust to specific needs and/or requests of the individual communities served.

**B. Project Implementation**

**1. *Describe the target population State the methods used for determining the target population and the number of youths to be served***

The target population is from age 10 to 18. All races and ethnic groups will be offered our services. Services will be offered to males and females and adapted to meet specific needs. Volunteer facilitators will be assigned cases to fit the particular situation as requested or deemed necessary. The target population is that of juvenile court fitting our category of first time offenders in non-violent property crimes. In the past year we helped 105 juveniles, their families and their victims. \$1,827 dollars in restitution was restored to the victims.

**2. *Describe how the program would address the specific needs of minority youth. Please explain if you are in an area with few or no minority youth.***

Participation in mediation services is voluntary; participants choose to be involved versus being assigned to receive services. Mediation has not shown to be as effective if forced upon people, which might affect the attitude of the person and their ability to honor the agreements which they have made.

However, race and ethnic demographic data based on our referrals from 10/28/02 to the present, reflect 72.2% white, 26% black, and 1.8% other. This is consistent with the population of the area. We have volunteer interpreters, (including a bi-lingual Board member) available to help provide services to the Hispanic population.

One of the great benefits of VORP for youth is that the juvenile's case is handled outside the court room, and if the youth completes restitution then she or he will have no record of offenses which might hinder them in the future.

Our facilitators are multi-racial and we are sensitive to pair facilitators with offenders of the same race if requested or deemed appropriate.

***3. Describe how the program would address any gender specific needs of females.***

We are sensitive to the gender-specific needs of females. We will match participant to volunteer facilitators with whom they can feel comfortable to achieve the most positive results, (i.e. female with female) if requested or deemed appropriate.

***5. Provide precise, time bound, realistic and measurable objectives for each goal.***  
**Objectives**

1. To increase the number of victims willing to participate so that more juvenile offenders will have the opportunity to participate. Measure # of cases/ versus last period.
2. To increase the number of facilitators to handle our growing case loads. Recruit and conduct three training sessions this year to increase # of facilitators.
3. To increase conflict resolution services offered to the community on a voluntary basis

***6. Develop an annual work plan using a quarterly format. List specific activities to be done and the responsible personnel for achieving the project's objective.***

**1<sup>st</sup> Quarter (Oct.-Dec)**

Meet with referral sources – Exec Dir.  
  
Recruit volunteers –Exec Dir. & Prog Co.  
Train volunteers –Exec Dir.  
Get referrals – Prog Co.  
Begin providing services–E.D& Prog Co.  
PR about project – Exec Dir. & Prog Co.  
Evaluate services- Prog Co  
Complete reports – Exec Dir  
Fundraising – Exec Dir

**2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter (Jan.-Mar)**

Meet with referral sources (continued)  
– Exec Dir.& Prog. Co.  
Provide services – Exec Dir. & Prog. Co  
Liaison with volunteers- Exec Dir.& Prog.  
Continue to receive referrals – Prog. Co.  
Adjust procedures as needed – Prog. Co.  
Continue to evaluate services – Prog. Co.  
Recruit volunteers – Exec Dir. & Prog. Co.  
Train vol. – Exec Dir.  
PR about project- Exec Dir. & Prog. Co.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter (Apr–Jun)**

Recruit Vol.(s) For fund raising event

(Chattanooga Chase)- Exec. Dir. &amp; Prog. .

Receive referrals – Prog. Co.

Provide services –Exec. Dir. &amp;Prog. Co

**4<sup>th</sup> Quarter (Jul-Sep)**

Complete plans for second year –Exec. Dir &amp; Prog Co

Recruit vols - Exec. Dir &amp; Prog. Co Meet w/referral sources

Evaluate program –Exec Dir &amp; Prog

Train volunteers

Continue to survey and evaluate

***6. Describe why you believe the quantified goals and objectives of the project are realistic. How reasonable is the amount of work outlined in the annual work plan in consideration of the available personnel.***

Our project goal is to expand and to position VORP to handle more case referrals from Hamilton County Juvenile Court, thus to alleviate the burden to the court.

A specific goal is to accept double the number of referrals as the previous last year period. Based on what we have been able to accomplish as a start-up with one full time employee, we believe that now that we have an additional part-time person, our goal is realistic.

Our start-up has taken longer than we had anticipated because of the size and the complexity of the court system. Also as with all new programs it is taking longer for victims and offenders to become aware of our program and the benefits it provides to them.

***7. Describe how this project will be a part of a comprehensive and coordinated community system of services as defined I items (A-D) in the general information” section of this packet***

We are housed and given office space by Judge Suzanne Bailey in the Hamilton County Juvenile Court Building which allows us to interact and coordinate with a variety of youth related agencies. Since VORP handles its cases outside the court, we provide the least restrictive environment and we involve each juvenile’s family appropriately in the disposition of his or her offense. There is no charge and the family often saves much time and lawyer fees by participating in our program

The early intervention which allows a juvenile to realize the impact on another person of their actions often results in reduced recidivism. The self esteem of the juvenile is enhanced when they take responsibility for their actions and make restitution. Since they remain in the community their safety and wellbeing are guarded.

The Kiwanis Club of Chattanooga with its focus on youth is a founding sponsor and continues to provide volunteers, community education, and support. St Peter’s Episcopal Church, the YMCA, Jewish Cultural Center and others in the civic and faith community provide meeting sites, space for training, volunteers, money, and sponsorship. The merchants of the community who have special interest in reducing shoplifting are also enthusiastic supporters of our program.

**8. *Describe how the project demonstrates a collaborative effort with other agencies in the community. Explain how the project personnel will interface with other agencies and the TCCY Regional councils***

Victims and offenders are referred to us through the Hamilton County Juvenile Court. Both the offender and the victim have to agree to participate and participation is voluntary. We collaborate with court officials to determine which cases meet our criteria and which juveniles would benefit from our services.

Through our outreach efforts, we have developed relationships with other community agencies that are serving youth. We are currently included as part of a summer program at the Northside Neighborhood House that serves underprivileged, at-risk youth and will be working with their after-school program in the Fall.

We have been invited to work with the leaders of the local chapters of the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts to develop scheduled sessions dealing with conflict resolution skills.

Through our close relationship with the Kiwanis Club of Chattanooga, services are offered to all of their members and affiliated organizations.

Our Executive Director and Program Coordinator attend community meetings such as Partners in Prevention (through the Hamilton County Health Dept.) that are also attended by representatives of TCCY. We attend community events such as “Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week” that are attended by TCCY representatives. We are on the “list serve” for the TCCY regional council representative, Marilyn Davis.

**10. *Provide the physical address, email address, and telephone number for each site where project activities occur***

Community Reconciliation, Inc. 1600 East Third St., Chattanooga, TN 37404  
Phone: (423) 209-5144 email: [commrec@bellsouth.net](mailto:commrec@bellsouth.net)

\*Our meetings take place at neutral sites. We try to conduct the meetings at a location that is convenient for the participants.  
***(See Meeting Sites: attachment #1)***

**C. Project Evaluation**



**1. Describe how the projects outcomes and outputs will be evaluated. Include any evaluations forms that are already developed as an appendix to this application.**

The project will be measured by:

- I. The number of cases referred which result in victim-offender agreements/contracts (percent yield).
- II. The number and the percent of cases closed with contracts successfully completed. This gives the number of cases that are not handled by the court. (reduction of court time and expense and the amount of restitution returned to victims of crime)
- III. The number of participants expressing satisfaction in the process, the results of the mediation, and their interaction with the trained facilitators
- IV. The number of participants served, victims, families and juvenile.
- V. The number of people trained as volunteer facilitators

Was the project implementation time table met?

What barriers were identified and how were they addressed?

Data collection and statistics (ages, ethnicity, etc.) will be done by staff

***(See Data Collection and Satisfaction Surveys: attachment #2)***

**D. Project Personnel**

**1. For each job title funded by the project include the following:**

<b>Person and Job Title</b>	Berti LeWinter	Executive Director
<b>Percent of time spent on project</b>	75%	
<b>Qualifications –</b>	B.S. Virginia Commonwealth University	
<b>Job Responsibilities:</b>	<b><i>(See Job Description: attachment #3)</i></b>	

<b>Person and Job Title:</b>	Aileen Carroll	Program Coordinator
<b>Percent of time spent on project:</b>	100%	
<b>Qualifications –</b>	(see resume)	
<b>Job responsibilities:</b>	<b><i>( See Job Description: attachment #3)</i></b>	

***(See Resume, Diploma and Resume: attachment #4)***

**2. Organizational Chart:**

The Program Coordinator reports directly to the Executive Director

The Executive Director reports directly to the Board

***(See Organizational Chart: attachment #5)***

## **E. Past Accomplishments**

***1. Continuation projects state what outcomes and output were achieved.***

***2. Continuation projects.....***

We are not a continuation project

***3. If this is an application for a new project, and the applicant or implementing agency has not been previously funded by TCCY, describe other programs developed by the agency, funding obtained, and outcomes.***

Our New Project VORP was founded at the request of Judge Suzanne Bailey and Mayor Gene Roberts. We have not been previously funded by TCCY. We received our first referral 10/28/02. VORP receives non-violent first time offender cases from juvenile court (ie. shoplifting, vandalism etc.) We have been given office space in the juvenile court but operate from there as an independent supporting organization.

As a “start-up” it has taken us longer to stabilize and build our program due to the complexity of the juvenile court system. The surveys that we have given to our participants show positive responses.

We have received funding from local foundations (Caldwell, Osborne, Grandview & the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga). Other funding has been received from the faith based community, the Kiwanis Club of Chattanooga, and local businesses, and fundraisers. We received a small grant from the State of Tennessee through the Administrative Office of the Courts and a small grant from the Tennessee Bar Association’s IOLTA funds.

***4. If this would be your first time receiving TCCY funds, please explain any experience the applicant has working with children.***

The Executive Director Berti LeWinter came to VORP from her job in a group home for teenagers who were in the custody of the State of Tennessee. She was familiar with courts and with advocacy for children. She has worked as a substitute teacher in elementary schools and as a volunteer assisting in children’s art classes. She has done extensive volunteer work with the local Girl Scouts.

## **F. Future Funding Strategies**

- 1. Explain how project will be funded after TCCY funding ends. Provide the names of three possible funding organizations that will be contacted this year and an estimate time frame when their funding could begin.***

***If approved for a second and third year funding, the project will receive 75% and 50% of the first year's approved budget. Identify how the project will be maintained at the first year level.***

Since we are a start-up organization, we have not had time to develop the many contacts we have in Chattanooga. Our Development Committee has set goals for numbers of individuals and faith organizations to be contacted each month. As these numbers grow, we feel our support will continue to increase.

We also believe that we can receive some long term corporate sponsorships to provide steady funding for our program. This support along with Kiwanis, the State and Court money, the continuing support of our local foundations should help us achieve a balanced budget. We will be applying to the local United Way to become one of their agencies, but again this will take a year or two. We are confident that given time by this grant, we have the strategy, the contacts, and the resources to maintain and expand our program.

**Community Reconciliation, Inc.**



